

Community Colleges Must Be *Resilient by Design*



Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders

2026 Alliance Annual Meeting

April 15, 2026



About NCHEMS

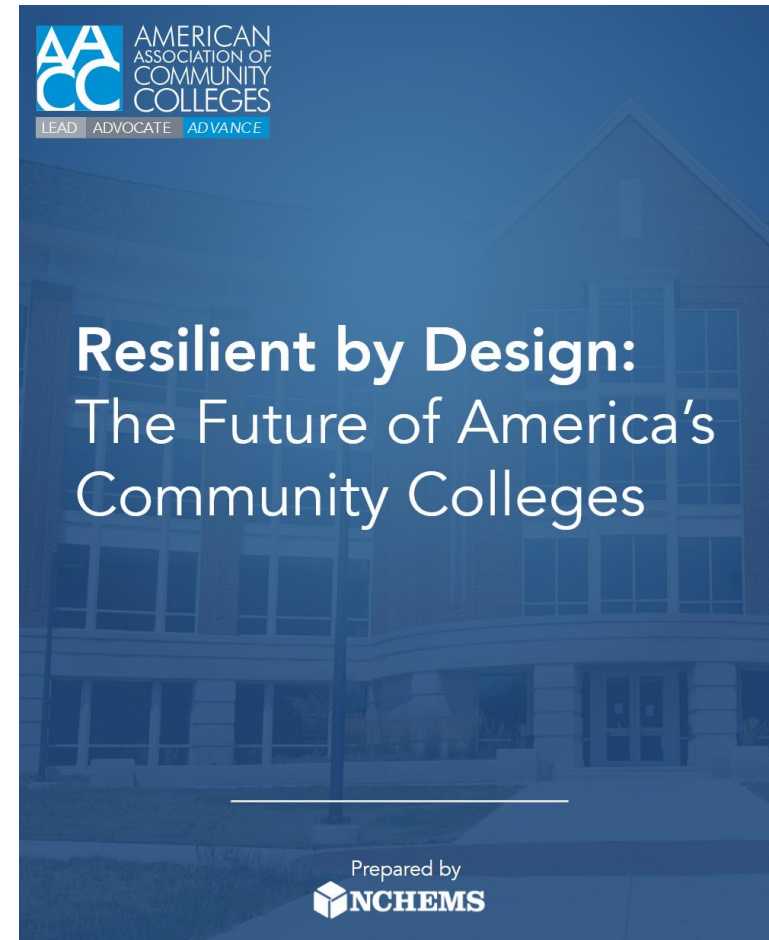


Vision: We envision a future in which postsecondary education expands opportunities for all, strengthens communities, and advances the public good.



Mission: NCHEMS partners with institution, system, government, and community leaders to effectively use evidence to improve strategic decision-making in postsecondary education.

Link to the *Resilient by Design* Report and Associated Discussion and Facilitator Guides



Why We Are Planning for a Future of Change



- Both familiar and fresh challenges
- Heightened expectations and accountability
- Continuously and rapidly evolving conditions



The first thing you should let everyone know is the greatest change out there is the rate of change itself.”

Jack Uldrich
Author and Futurist



Resilient by Design Themes

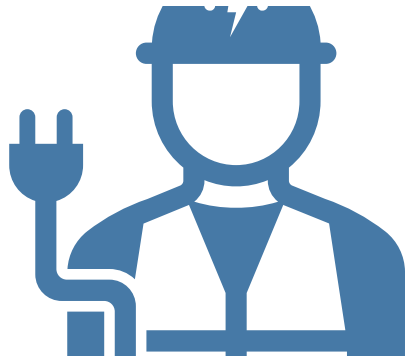
- Meeting Workforce Needs... Even as They Regularly Change.
- Managing Enrollment... Amidst Shifting Student Demographics
- Meeting Student Needs... Even as Needs Evolve and Grow
- Using Advanced Technologies... For Your College and your Students
- Reimagining Teaching... and Ensuring that Students Learn Relevant Skills
- Using Data in New Ways... to Improve College Work and Prove College Worth
- Rethinking Your College's Business Model



I am still dismayed by how few institutions in our sector have truly embraced institutional transformation to improve student success and outcomes. More work is needed at implementing... at scale.”

NCHEMS Survey Respondent

Meeting Workforce Needs... Even as They Regularly Change



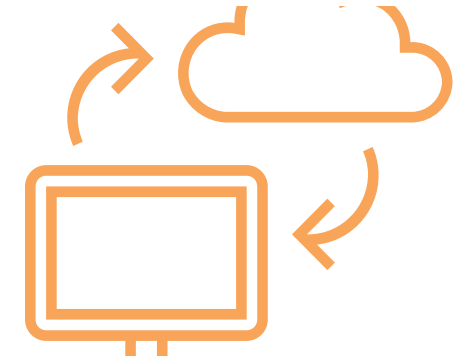
Shift to Skill-
Based Hiring



Lifelong Learning
and Reskilling



Credential
Production Trends



Rapidly Evolving
Job Market

Meeting Workforce Needs... Even as They Regularly Change

Students need:

- Skills that are marketable now.
- Long-term resilience and the ability to continuously learn and adapt.





The longevity of our institutions will be wholly aligned to their ability to meet local demands and needs.”

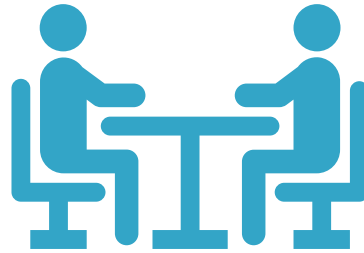
Jee Hang Lee
President and CEO
Association for Community College Trustees

Managing Enrollment...

Amidst Shifting Student Demographics



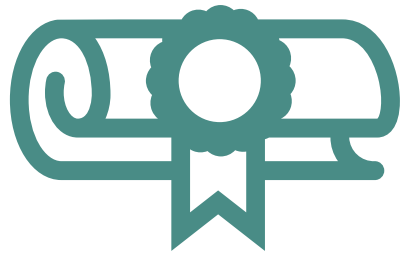
Enrollment Declines



Dual Enrollment



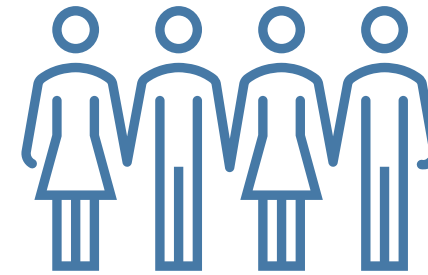
Decline in High School Graduates



College-Going Rates are Declining



Changing Demographic Composition



New Audiences

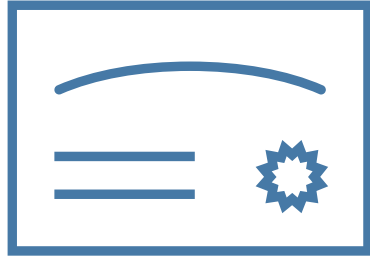


In 20 years, [all of] public education will probably be one-half to one-third of the size it is now.”

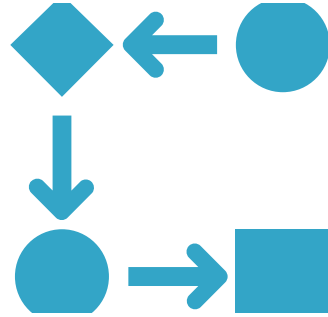
Rufus Glasper
President and CEO

The League for Innovation in the Community College

Meeting Student Needs ... Even as Needs Grow and Evolve



Demand for Flexible,
Shorter Credentials



Rise of Non-Linear,
Hybrid Learning
Paths



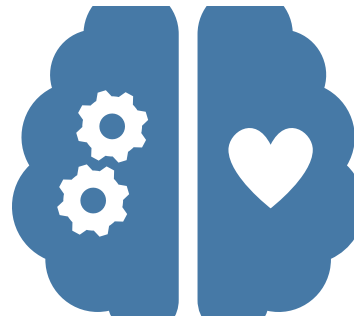
Increasing Reliance
on Online Learning



Shifting
Demographics,
Expanding Needs



Basic Needs Security,
Including Housing



Mental Health &
Achievement Gap



Certifying Learning



Anything that gets in the way of our student is our responsibility.”

Mike Flores
Chancellor
Alamo Colleges

Using Advancing Technologies ... for Your College and Your Students



New technologies will require changes to:

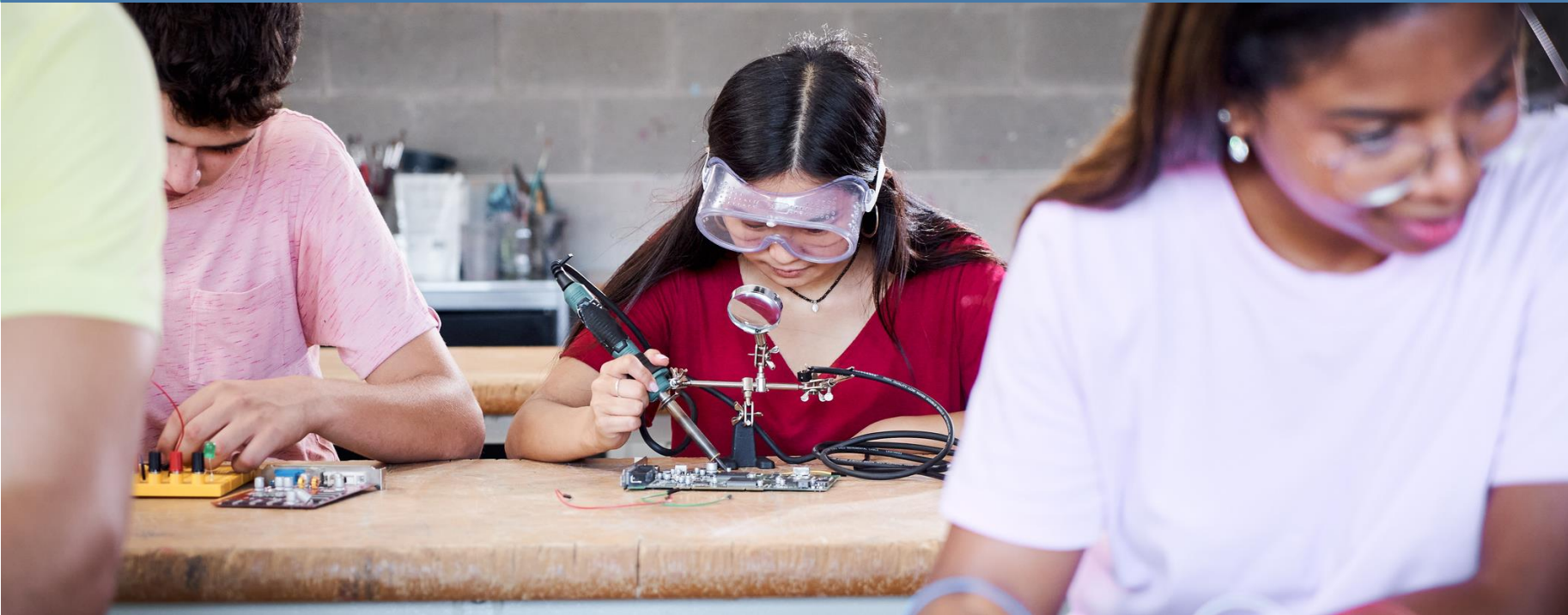
- Education content
- Teaching and learning
- Maintenance plans and budgets
- College operations



The consumer has changed drastically and how they consume has also changed; Blockbuster, Motorola, and taxis are there as constant reminders of it.”

NCHEMS Survey Respondent

Reimagining Teaching ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills





Reimagining Teaching ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills

- Accelerating and certifying learning
 - » Credit for prior learning
 - » Competency-based education
 - » Short-term and stackable credentials of value
 - » Remove barriers between credit and noncredit programming
 - » Course schedules and modalities
- Relevant and resilient skills
 - » Embedded workplace experiences throughout coursework
 - » Redesigned durable skill development (gen ed) in program-specific and career-technical coursework
- Unpacking the faculty role

Using Data in New Ways... to Improve College Work and Prove College Worth





Using Data in New Ways... to Improve College Work and Prove College Worth



I really think that there's going to be this increasingly ruthless focus on ROI, both by individuals, but also by public bodies.”

Michael Carney
President

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation



Using Data in New Ways... to Improve College Work and Prove College Worth

Colleges need:

- Multiple measures of student success, including subsequent enrollment and return on investment.
- Locally relevant labor market data, including
 - » Available jobs.
 - » Employment and wage outcomes.
- A “culture of evidence”—more consistent use of data for strategy and planning, resource allocation, and program and curriculum review

Rethinking Your College's Business Model



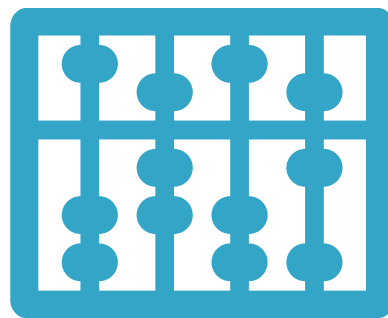
Shifting Student Mix



Affordability and Student Need



Public and Local Funding Pressures



Cost Management Struggles



Need for Innovation



Infrastructure Backlog



Expanding Competition



Emphasis on Outcomes and ROI



Becoming Resilient



As we move forward, community colleges... are going to have to figure out how to fight the things that make the system rigid.”

Jeff Strohl

Director, Georgetown University Center on
Education and the Workforce



Becoming Resilient



Provide faculty and staff with the tools and resources to effectively navigate the most significant change management initiative in the history of organizations.”

NCHEMS Survey Respondent

Strengths and Opportunities



It won't be easy, but...

- Community Colleges are well-positioned to take on these challenges.
- Your work is more needed than ever.

Thank you

Stay in touch:



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